

Examiner: Omar R. Ali

Group Art No. : 2178

Atty Docket : 260-010

Title : METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR SENSING AND COMMUNICATING
UPDATED STATUS INFORMATION FOR REMOTE USERS
ACCESSIBLE THROUGH AN INSTANT MESSAGING SYSTEM

Commissioner for Patents

Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

APPEAL BRIEF

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I. Real Party in Interest

The real party in interest is International Business Machines Corporation.

II. Related Appeals and Interferences

Appellants are not aware of any appeals or interferences that are related to the present case.

III. Status of the Claims

This is an Appeal Brief from a decision dated January 8, 2010, finally rejecting all the claims currently pending in the present application. No claims have been allowed. The currently pending claims are 2-6, 8-10 and 33-41.

The status of claims 2-6, 8-10 and 33-41 is rejected.

The status of claims 1, 7, 11-32 and 42 is cancelled.

The rejections of claims 2-6, 8-10 and 33-41 under 35 U.S.C. 103 are the subject of this appeal.

IV. Status of Amendments

The claims were last amended in the response filed October 29, 2009, and those claim amendments have been entered. No amendments have been made in response to the Final Office Action of January 8, 2010.

A Notice of Appeal was filed on July 7, 2010.

V. Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

Independent claim 4 sets forth a computer implemented method of providing, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system having at least one processor and a computer readable memory, a local user of said local computer system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, comprising:

obtaining, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user (see for example lines 7-12 on page 15 of the Specification);

presenting a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an online status icon associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said online status icon of said remote computer system user includes a graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session (see for example lines 5-16 on page 29 of the Specification);

obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user (see for example line 16 on page 15 through line 15 on page 16 of the Specification); and

modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate

and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system (see for example lines 16-19 on page 29 of the Specification and icons 502 and 504 in Fig. 20).

Claim 2 sets forth the method of claim 4, further comprising:

subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user hovering a cursor over said representation of said remote computer system user (see for example lines 6-8 on page 30 of the Specification); and

removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to said presenting of said updated status message (see for example lines 17-21 on page 30 of the Specification).

Claim 3 sets forth the method of claim 4, further comprising:

subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user selecting said representation of said remote computer system user (see for example lines 19-20 on page 3 and lines 13-16 on page 19 of the Specification); and

removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to

said presenting of said updated status message (see for example lines 17-21 on page 30 of the Specification).

Claim 5 sets forth the method of claim 4, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is maintained by said awareness client application process on said local computer system (see for example lines 16-18 on page 19 of the Specification and reference number 130 in Fig. 5).

Claim 6 sets forth the method of claim 4, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is an awareness object within a display window associated with an application process on said local computer system other than said awareness client application process (see for example line 7 on page 17 through line 11 on page 19 and lines 1-5 on page 31 of the Specification, and reference number 160 in Fig. 4).

Claim 8 sets forth the method of claim 4, further comprising presenting said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing for a predetermined time after said obtaining said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user by starting a timer in response to said modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to include said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing and removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing in response to expiration of said timer (see for example lines 2-6 on page 30 of the Specification).

Claim 9 sets forth the method of claim 4, further comprising:

presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to indicate whether an additional visual indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system user is available for viewing is provided to other users (see for example lines 2-3 on page 4 of the Specification).

Claim 10 sets forth the method of claim 4, further comprising:

presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to specify one or more other users to which an additional visual indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system is available for viewing may be presented (see for example lines 3-4 on page 4 of the Specification).

Independent claim 33 sets forth a system for providing, by an awareness client application process (see for example Awareness Client Process 52 in Fig. 1) executing on a local computer system (see for example Client Systems 10 in Fig. 1) having at least one processor and a computer readable memory (see for example lines 16 and 18 on page 38 of the Specification), a local user of said local computer system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, said client application process comprising:

program code for obtaining, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user (see for example lines 7-12 on page 15 of the Specification);

program code for presenting a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an online

status icon associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said online status icon of said remote computer system user includes a graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session (see for example lines 5-16 on page 29 of the Specification);

program code for obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user (see for example line 16 on page 15 through line 15 on page 16 of the Specification); and

program code for modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system (see for example lines 16-19 on page 29 of the Specification and icons 502 and 504 in Fig. 20).

Claim 34 sets forth the system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user hovering a cursor

over said representation of said remote computer system user (see for example lines 6-8 on page 30 of the Specification); and

program code for removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to said presenting of said updated status message (see for example lines 17-21 on page 30 of the Specification).

Claim 35 sets forth the system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user selecting said representation of said remote computer system user (see for example lines 19-20 on page 3 and lines 13-16 on page 19 of the Specification); and

program code for removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to said presenting of said updated status message (see for example lines 17-21 on page 30 of the Specification).

Claim 36 sets forth the system of claim 33, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is maintained by said awareness client application process on said local computer system (see for example lines 16-18 on page 19 of the Specification and reference number 130 in Fig. 5).

Claim 37 sets forth the system of claim 33, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is an awareness object within a display window associated with an application process on said local computer system other than said awareness

client application process (see for example line 7 on page 17 through line 11 on page 19 and lines 1-5 on page 31 of the Specification, and reference number 160 in Fig. 4).

Claim 38 sets forth the system of claim 33, further comprising program code for presenting said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing for a predetermined time after said obtaining said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user by starting a timer in response to said modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to include said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing and removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing in response to expiration of said timer (see for example lines 2-6 on page 30 of the Specification).

Claim 39 sets forth the system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to indicate whether an additional visual indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system user is available for viewing is provided to other users (see for example lines 2-3 on page 4 of the Specification).

Claim 40 sets forth the system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to specify one or more other users to which an additional visual indication that an updated status

message associated with said user of said local computer system is available for viewing may be presented (see for example lines 3-4 on page 4 of the Specification).

Independent claim 41 sets forth a computer program product including a computer readable memory (see for example ROM and CD-ROM disks in lines 11-12 and/or floppy disks in line 13 on page 39 of the Specification) having program code stored thereon for providing, by an awareness client application process (see for example Awareness Client Process 52 in Fig. 1) executing on a local computer system (see for example Client Systems 10 in Fig. 1) having at least one processor and a computer readable memory (see for example lines 16 and 18 on page 38 of the Specification), a local user of said local computer system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, said program code comprising:

program code for obtaining, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user (see for example lines 7-12 on page 15 of the Specification);

program code for presenting a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an online status icon associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said online status icon of said remote computer system user includes a graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session (see for example lines 5-16 on page 29 of the Specification);

program code for obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user

other than said online status of said remote computer system user (see for example line 16 on page 15 through line 15 on page 16 of the Specification); and

program code for modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system (see for example lines 16-19 on page 29 of the Specification and icons 502 and 504 in Fig. 20).

VI. Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal

- A. Claims 3-5, 33, 35, 36 and 41 stand rejected for obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103, based on the combination of United States patent 7,185,290 ("Cadiz"), United States patent application publication 2005/0181878 ("Danieli") and United States patent 7,185,290 ("Canfield").
- B. Claims 2, 6, 8-10, 34 and 37-40 stand rejected for obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103 based on combinations of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield with United States patent publication 2004/0183829 ("Kontny"), United States patent 7,149,961 ("Harville") and United States patent 6,697,840 ("Godefroid").

VII. Argument

A. The Examiner has failed to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103 in the rejection of independent claims 4, 33 and 41 using the combination of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield.

To establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. *In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981, 180 USPQ 580 (CCPA 1974). “All words in a claim must be considered in judging the patentability of that claim against the prior art.” *In re Wilson*, 424 F.2d 1382, 1385, 165 USPQ 494, 496 (CCPA 1970). Appellants respectfully assert that the combination of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield does not disclose or suggest *obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional*

visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system, as for example set forth in the present independent claim 4.

U.S. Patent No. 7,185,290 ("Cadiz"):

Cadiz discloses a system for providing peripheral awareness of information to a user that may be determined automatically, or specified by the user. The information provided by Cadiz is automatically tracked and provided in an interactive peripheral display to the user. Cadiz determines or specifies, tracks or watches, and provides the information using a customizable dynamic encapsulated object, a "ticket," that when paired with a "viewer," provides peripheral awareness of information to the user, and that are sharable among users, and may be copied, cut, pasted, saved, transmitted, dragged and dropped from web pages, etc., like any other electronic file using conventional techniques.

U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2005/0181878 ("Danieli"):

Danieli discloses a system for facilitating selection of participants in multiplayer online electronic games. The Danieli system is intended to provide an efficient procedure for players to host and join new instances of multiplayer online electronic games, as well as providing a scheme that enables players to join multiplayer online electronic games that are already in progress. The Danieli system is implemented through a gaming utility that runs on each player's

electronic device (e.g. PC) and interacts behind the scenes with an online messaging service. In Danieli, player hosts are enabled to select players from a list of contacts provided by the online messaging service who they want to invite to join a chat session, and a multiplayer online electronic game is launched on all of the player's computers through a single command issued by the host. The gaming utility of Danieli provides players with a list of existing chat sessions being hosted by other players so as to enable the players to join multiplayer online electronic games that are already in progress.

U.S. Patent No. 7,185,290 (“Canfield”):

Canfield discloses a user interface that enables user perception of information regarding a communications session and that leverages an instant messaging platform. The user interface of Canfield includes an instant messaging application user interface and one or more tear-off elements corresponding to ongoing instant messaging communications sessions. Each tear-off element in Canfield is configured to enable perception and selection by a user of a corresponding instant messaging communications session.

Claims 3-5, 33, 35, 36 and 41:

Independent claim 4, for example, sets forth a computer implemented method of providing, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system having at least one processor and a computer readable

memory, a local user of said local computer system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, comprising:

obtaining, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

presenting a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an online status icon associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said online status icon of said remote computer system user includes a graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session;

obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and

modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system. (emphasis added)

In contrast to the above highlighted features of the present independent claim 4, the combination of the cited references results in a system only providing representations of remote computer system users that include indications of the status or availability of each of the other users with regard to online *activities*, as opposed to visually representing the availability of updated *personal detail* information for the remote users in the representations of the remote users, as in the present independent claims. Specifically, Cadiz discloses graphical representations of the communications availability or status (i.e. for

communicating by way of email, voicemail, messaging servers, telephone) for each communications contact using conventional social queues (e.g. eye contact) in the images of the remote users to indicate contact availability or status, Danieli discloses an interface (Fig. 6) exposing the abilities of other users to participate in various online activities (i.e. chatting or gaming) using darkened or lightened base icons as well as graphical headsets or chat balloons, and Canfield discloses tear-off elements that include a status indicator indicating whether a new IM message in a corresponding IM session remains pending for review. The cited combination of Cadiz, Canfield and Danieli therefore discloses techniques for providing representations of remote users that indicate the status or availability of the remote user with regard to communication *activity* (as in Cadiz and Danieli), and providing a representation of an instant messaging session that includes an indication that a new message is pending for review in the instant messaging session (as in Canfield). Nowhere in the cited combination is there disclosed or suggested a method including *obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent*

from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system, as in the present independent claim 4.

As to independent claim 33, it should also be apparent from the above that the combination of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield also does not disclose or suggest a system that includes *program code for modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system, as in the present independent claim 33.*

As to independent claim 41, it should additionally be apparent from the above that the combination of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield also does not disclose

or suggest a computer program product that includes *program code for modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system, as in the present independent claim 41.*

For the above reasons, Appellants respectfully urge that the Examiner has not established a *prima facie* case of obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103 with regard to the present independent claims. As to claims 3, 5, 35 and 36, they each depend from independent claims 4 and 33, and are respectfully believed to be patentable over the combination of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield for at least the same reasons.

B. The cited combinations of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield with Kontny, Harville and Godefroid also do not disclose or suggest all the limitations of independent claims 4 and 33, since Kontny, Harville and/or Godefroid also do not disclose or suggest *obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated*

status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system, as for example in the present independent claim 4. Claims 2, 6, 8-10, 34 and 37-40 depend from claims 4 and 33 and are respectfully believed to be patentable over the cited combinations of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield with Kontny, Harville and Godefroid for at least the same reasons.

U.S. Patent Application No. 2004/0183829 (“Kontny”) :

Kontny discloses a dynamic collaboration assistant application for use in a computing system including a terminal connected to a server. The dynamic collaboration assistant application of Kontny includes a collaborative gateway

application for generating a collaborative gateway GUI on the terminal. Kontny discloses a context listener module located on the terminal is used to continuously monitor a context in which a user is using the terminal. A context translator module analyzes the context message and dynamically adjusts the display of the plurality of collaboration applications in the collaborative gateway GUI as a function of the context in which the user is using the terminal.

U.S. Patent No. 7,149,961 (“Harville”):

Harville discloses that a "path-enhanced" presentation is automatically generated from previously recorded "path-enhanced" multimedia based on time and location information associated with the multimedia. In the teachings of Harville, the path based on the time and location information is rendered over a two-dimensional map. The presentation of Harville indicates position and progress along the path, and at the same time, previously recorded multimedia corresponding to points or segments of that path are automatically played. When a moving icon reaches a location that is associated with multimedia, that multimedia is automatically played by the Harville system.

U.S. Patent No. 6,697,840 (“Godefroid”):

Godefroid discloses a system in which presence awareness initiatives are implemented in a collaborative system that enables a user to set presence awareness policies, and that provides a reasonably high assurance that the system will correctly implement those policies. The collaborative presence awareness

system of Godefroid enables users to specify complex presence awareness policies. The presence awareness system of Godefroid also includes employing systematic state-space exploration tools to establish a high level of assurance that the presence awareness system has the capability to implement correctly, substantially all possible presence awareness policies. The presence awareness policy specifications of Godefroid are modular relative to the rest of the presence awareness system, and can be modified without having to modify computational modules or user interface program code of the presence awareness system. A user of the Godefroid system has the capability to update his or her presence information, and the system automatically collects presence information about the user and automatically updates his or her presence information.

Claims 2, 6, 8-10, 34 and 37-40:

Claims 2, 6, 8-10, 34 and 37-40 depend from claims 4 and 33. As discussed above, the combination of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield does not disclose or suggest all the limitations of the present claims 4 and 33, since the combination of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield does not disclose or suggest *obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with*

said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system, as for example in the present claim 4. Adding the teachings of Kontny, Harville and/or Godefroid to Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield does not remedy the shortcomings of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield, as Kontny, Harville and/or Godefroid also do not disclose or suggest the above indicated features of claims 4 and 22.

Appellants accordingly respectfully urge that the cited combinations of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield with Kontny, Harville and/or Godefroid also fail to support a *prima facie* case of obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103 with regard to claims 4 and 33. As claims 2, 6, 8-10, 34 and 37-40 depend from claims 4 and 33, they are respectfully believed to be patentable over the cited combinations of Cadiz, Danieli and Canfield with Kontny, Harville and/or Godefroid for at least the same reasons.

Conclusion

For the reasons above, Appellants respectfully submits that the rejections of the present claims under 35 U.S.C. 103 are improper for at least the reasons set

forth above. Appellants accordingly request that the rejections be withdrawn and the pending claims be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

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VIII. Claims Appendix

The currently pending claims are as follows:

1. (canceled)

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising:

subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user hovering a cursor over said representation of said remote computer system user; and

removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to said presenting of said updated status message.

3. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising:

subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user selecting said representation of said remote computer system user; and

removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to said presenting of said updated status message.

4. (previously presented) A computer implemented method of providing, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system having at least one processor and a computer readable memory, a local user of said local computer system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, comprising:

obtaining, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

presenting a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an online status icon associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said online status icon of said remote computer system user includes a graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session;

obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and

modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises

superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is maintained by said awareness client application process on said local computer system.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is an awareness object within a display window associated with an application process on said local computer system other than said awareness client application process.

7. (cancelled)

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising presenting said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing for a predetermined time after said obtaining said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user by starting a timer in response to said modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to include said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing and removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message

associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing in response to expiration of said timer.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising:

presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to indicate whether an additional visual indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system user is available for viewing is provided to other users.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, further comprising:

presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to specify one or more other users to which an additional visual indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system is available for viewing may be presented.

11. (canceled)

12. (canceled)

13. (canceled)

14. (canceled)

15. (canceled)

16. (canceled)

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (canceled)

20. (canceled)

21. (canceled)

22. (canceled)

23. (canceled)

24. (canceled)

25. (canceled)

26. (canceled)

27. (canceled)

28. (canceled)

29. (canceled)

30. (canceled)

31. (canceled)

32. (canceled)

33. (previously presented) A system for providing, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system having at least one processor and a computer readable memory, a local user of said local computer system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, said client application process comprising:

program code for obtaining, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

program code for presenting a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an online

status icon associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said online status icon of said remote computer system user includes a graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session;

program code for obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and

program code for modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system.

34. (previously presented) The system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user hovering a cursor over said representation of said remote computer system user; and

program code for removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to said presenting of said updated status message.

35. (previously presented) The system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for subsequently presenting said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system in response to said local user selecting said representation of said remote computer system user; and

program code for removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing responsive to said presenting of said updated status message.

36. (previously presented) The system of claim 33, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is maintained by said awareness client application process on said local computer system.

37. (previously presented) The system of claim 33, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user is an awareness object within a display window associated with an application process on said local computer system other than said awareness client application process.

38. (previously presented) The system of claim 33, further comprising program code for presenting said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated

with said remote computer system user is available for viewing for a predetermined time after said obtaining said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user by starting a timer in response to said modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to include said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing and removing said additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing in response to expiration of said timer.

39. (previously presented) The system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to indicate whether an additional visual indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system user is available for viewing is provided to other users.

40. (previously presented) The system of claim 33, further comprising:

program code for presenting an interface to said user of said local computer system, wherein said interface enables said user of said local computer system to specify one or more other users to which an additional visual indication that an updated status message associated with said user of said local computer system is available for viewing may be presented.

41. (previously presented) A computer program product including a computer readable memory having program code stored thereon for providing, by an awareness client application process executing on a local computer system having at least one processor and a computer readable memory, a local user of said local computer system with updated status information regarding at least one remote user, said program code comprising:

program code for obtaining, from an associated awareness server application process executing on a server computer system, an online status of said remote computer system user;

program code for presenting a representation of said remote computer system user, wherein said representation of said remote computer system user includes an online status icon associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said online status icon of said remote computer system user includes a graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session;

program code for obtaining an updated status message associated with said remote computer system user, wherein said updated status message includes personal detail information and activity information regarding said remote computer system user other than said online status of said remote computer system user; and

program code for modifying said online status icon associated with said remote computer system user to further include an additional visual indication that said updated status message associated with said remote computer system user is available for viewing by said local user of said local computer system, wherein said additional visual indication

is separate and visually independent from said graphical representation of whether said remote computer system user is currently available for an instant messaging communication session also included in said online status icon, and wherein said modifying comprises superimposing said additional visual indication over at least a portion of said online status icon without presenting any contents of said updated status message to said local user of said local computer system.

42. (cancelled)

IX. Evidence Appendix

None.

X. Related Proceedings Appendix

None.